WHIRRAKEE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Office Bearers for 2014 - 2015

President	*vacant*		
Vice President	Jenny Shield	e-mail: jennyshield66@gmail.com	5441 4029
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer		0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan		

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	*vacant*		
Excursion organiser	John Lindner		5448 3406
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan		
Librarian	Diana Collier & Maryann Hill		5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Jan Orr		
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens	e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Rod Orr		
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan		

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Alistair White, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner, Diana Collier, Jan Orr, Devi Shanty, Simon Hay

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 36, No. 3, April 2015
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
I was very saddened by the club's president's sudden resignation last month. Rod has filled so many roles in the club's life and history. He and Jan have always been so generous with their knowledge, have untiringly offered their help and have gone way beyond the expected, to promote the club and have increased its reputation and respect in the community (let alone their consistent contributions to the Whirrakee *with interesting observations and photos). Rod and Jan's departure is a big loss to the club, and I sincerely hope they will return in some role some time in the future. Until the vacancy is filled, Jenny Shield will act as president when needed and I thank Jenny very much for carrying on in his unexpected role. Other people to thank this month are the excursion and syllabus committee members for preparing a classy program of speakers and outings (page 10) There was a shortage of photos this month, so I had to resort to a few too many of my own... Please continue to send in your photos!*

Front page photographer: Joy Clusker
This wonderful action shot was taken on March 6, 2015 and shows of a group of Bendigo field naturalists during their autumn bird count at the Bendigo wastewater treatment farm. The results of the survey are on page 4.

Short Notices

Nestbox Monitoring

Discussion is under way with the ranger of Crusoe and Number 7 Parks, to assist with the monitoring and recording of fauna species utilising the park's many nestboxes.
Members who are interested in assisting with this project should contact Kerrie Norris ph. 54478017 for further details.

Email Notifications

If you wish to be advised promptly of interesting sightings, events or other special communications you can subscribe to our club's email notifications service. Subscribers to the service who make an unusual or interesting sighting in our region can email all other members of the service.
Email **subscribe** in the subject line to info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au if you wish to join the service. Include your full name in the body of the email.
To be added to the list you must first send an email to the address provided. This is the easiest way to manage the system.

Letters to the editor

From Anne Bridley

Thankyou to Ben for his thoughts about what could make our club better for members (see March *Whirrakee*, page 3).
Our members are a diverse bunch. Ages range from young to old, education from minimal to post-graduate. Some are tech savyy, while to others computers are a foreign country. But all members are equally valuable, and all have something to contribute. I am generalising here, but younger members have energy and enthusiasm and can bring new ideas to the club. Older members have experience and wisdom. I believe that a partnership needs to be found.
Our club purposes contain two main strands – social and scientific/conservation. It can sometimes be difficult balancing these two. But both are necessary.
Transparency and accountability have become important in our society, and I believe our club should be aware of this.
Clubs such as ours can provide a counter balance to an overly materialistic and competitive world. Cooperation between members on projects they are enthusiastic about can be part of this.

I have some specific suggestions:

1. That a brief report on the main decisions by the committee appears in *Whirrakee* monthly. This could include non-routine motions passed. Any extraordinary expenditure approved by the committee over a certain amount could also be reported in *Whirrakee*.
2. That our monthly speakers continue to reflect our clubs diversity of interests, and are selected from both amateurs and professionals. I would like to thank Ben for his choice of speakers over the last few years.
3. Excursions are very important to new members. Ideally, we would have at least one activity/workshop/excursion per month. The responsibility for excursions is a big one, and needs to be shared.
4. We spend some time thinking about club projects that can help bring the club together.

From Bev Culvenor

I was shocked and deeply saddened at our last meeting to hear our President, Rod Orr, resign from his position. I recognise his passion for the natural environment, his generosity in sharing his vast knowledge and his dedication to the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club.
Rod and Jan are part of a great line of contributors to the club. When I joined about 25 years ago I was apprehensive because I had no background in the field, apart from a father who loved birds and eucalypts, but I was made to feel welcome and soon became involved in all the activities - the camps, excursions, celebrations, the mammal and bird sub-groups, etc. I soon began to learn about the Club's history as names of certain founding members were recalled, such as Jack Kellam, Bob Allen, Leon Ruedin… cont. pg 8

Some late (?) flowering plants on a walk near the Garden of St Erth, Blackwood

Photos by Sabine Wilkens

We found these plants during a walk in February. From top left to bottom right: *Senecio* sp., *Mentha* sp., *Goodenia ovata* (?), Prickly Tea Tree *Leptospermum continentale* (?), Pink Hyacinth Orchid, *Dipodium roseum* (?)…Corrections to these identifications would be most welcome

An outing to Hanging Rock (March 7) (Photos by Sabine Wilkens)

Banksia marginata (left)

March excursion to the Bendigo Waste Water treatment Plant (photos by Joy Clusker)
The survey was undertaken in open water and swamp land.

Dead Whistling Kite

Eight observers participated with three scopes

List of bird species observed:

Blue-billed duck (15)
Musk Duck (9)
Freckled Duck (1)
Black Swan (22)
Australian Shelduck (2)
Grey Teal (139)
Chestnut Teal (46)
Pink-eared Duck (47)
Australasian Grebe (11)
Hoary-headed grebe (469)
Darter (1)
Little Pied Cormorant (16)
Australian Pelican (4)
White-faced Heron (15)
White-necked Heron (1)
Australian White Ibis (1)
Straw-necked Ibis (6)
Royal Spoonbill (1)
Black-shouldered Kite (1)
Black Kite (1)
Whistling Kite (1 + 1 dead)
Swamp Harrier (1)
Purple Swamphen (12)
Dusky Moorhen (8)
Eurasian Coot (870)
Black—fronted Dotterel (4)
Masked Lapwing (76)
Spotted Turtle-dove (1)
Crested Pigeon (1)
Galah (20)

Long-billed Corella (5)
Rainbow Lorikeet (2)
Musk Lorikeet (1)
Eastern Rosella (2)
Red-rumped Parrot (1)
Superb Fairy-wren (1)
Striated Pardalote (1)
White-browed- Scrubwren (1)
Red Wattlebird (1)
Black-faced Honeyeater (1)
White-plumed Honeyeater (1)
Grey Shrike-thrush (1)
Magpie-lark (2)
Willie Wagtail (2)
Dusky Woodswallow (1)
Grey Butcherbird (3)
Australian Magpie (present)

Grey Currawong (1)
Welcome Swallow (200+)
Tree Martin (1)
Fairy Martin (3)
Silvereye (1)
Blackbird* (present)
Starling* (present)
Common Myna* (present)

Highlights were the Blue-Billed Duck and a Musk Duck adult, carrying two young.

At the old tip site again… Photographs by Michael Angove

From top left to bottom right: Fuscous Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote and Grey Fantail (March 22), Black-fronted Dotterel and Australasian Grebe (March 8), and Dusky Woodswallow (March 15). When you see birds close-up like this, don't you wonder what they are thinking about?

Letters to the editor…continued

From page 3…Some were still active members - Jack and Jean Ipsen, Tom Patullo, Reg Smart and many more.

Peter Ellis has often related stories about the campaigns, which led to the conservation of, for example, the Whipstick and Salomon's Gully. So, the Club has a rich history.

It now continues with the contributions of a continuing membership of enthusiastic, knowledgeable and active members - Rob and Glenise Moors, Matt Comer, Bill Holsworth, John Lindner, Rob and Cynthia Watkins, Richard and Ben Goonan, Maurie Lewis, to name but a few. I could go on and on. To this group I must add Rod and Jan Orr who, over the years have accepted positions of responsibility, led excursions, organised activities (currently the very successful Family Nature Club) and generously imparted their passion and knowledge to others.

As Ben explained in his letter in the last edition of *Whirrakee*, this is a challenging time for clubs to retain and grow memberships. So it is important that we always welcome new members and appreciate what they can bring to our Club. New members help us to keep in touch with the coming generations as well as cultural and technological developments. They might observe things from a different standpoint. But the current membership can also offer them knowledge and expertise which has been accumulated over many years of experience and observations, sharing information with each other and developing strategies for conserving what we have, much of which is now threatened by so-called progress.

As members of Bendigo Field Naturalists Club we have common interests and causes. We need to work together and acknowledge, appreciate and above all, respect the diverse membership that has kept the Club viable for 70 years. Judging by Rod's emotional resignation speech, I suspect these attributes have been wanting in our current committee.

Thank you Rod and Jan for your enormous contribution over the years.

An early morning observation

by Ben Goonan

6.58am Friday 20 March 2015

Lying half asleep, or half awake, in the dull early morning light the dawn chorus is just beginning to fill the crisp air to greet the sunrise and I can hear the calls of Red Wattlebirds, White-eared Honeyeaters and a Grey Currawong. As I drift between sleeping and waking, listening and thinking, the birdsongs build and other species join in including Grey Butcherbirds and Superb Fairy-wrens. Suddenly I hear a different sound, non-avian, not clearly, but my attention is now focused. It's a soft sound, repeated, almost rhythmically, close enough to hear coming from the Ironbark just outside the open window. I hesitate for a moment pondering the possibilities: what makes a soft scratching sound? Maybe it's a Sugar Glider. Probably unlikely at this time of the day, I think, and I haven't heard any soft yelps, so what is it? As the birds call - I can hear Grey Fantails and Weebills now joining in - I reluctantly reach out and pull back the curtain to peer out into the morning. It's still dull, but the sky is beginning to glow and the Ironbark's multiple black trunks appear silhouetted against the sky. I can still hear the sound but can't see anything. Then, as my eyes adjust, and while I survey up and down, a movement catches my attention. The outline of a bushy tail and rounded body appear and I instantly recognise what I had hoped was the creature making the sound. Gently pulsing as it scratches, searching for something in a fissure, the Tuan or Brush-tailed Phascogale is only two metres away. It darts around the trunk, on its way down, and I rest again listening to the birds. I hear more scratching under the house. By now more birdsongs are filling the air including the Grey Shrike-thrush, Striated Pardalote, Scarlet Robin and Rufous Whistler. Intermittently in the past the Tuan has visited my place. This is now the second time I have seen one this year and I believe it may have taken up residence.

April Excursion Details (by John Lindner)

Location: Wellsford State Forest
Date: Sunday April 26
Duration Whole day, but you could leave after the walk if necessary
Notification: It would be good to get an idea of how big a group will be going. Would you please let me know at the April meeting or telephone (5448 3406 – leave a message if no answer).
Weather: The excursion will proceed if it is slightly rainy or squally. It will only be cancelled if it looks like bucketing down all day.
Leader: John Lindner & others (Stuart Fraser)
Meeting: 8.30 am at the clubrooms in Golden Square
Car Pooling: You are encouraged to car pool in order to take as few vehicles as possible. Passengers should be prepared to contribute towards the cost of fuel of the car they use.
Please bring: Back pack, water bottle, sturdy walking boots, wind/rain jacket, hat and/or beanie, binoculars, magnifying glass, field guides, note book, chair for lunch time.
Morning and afternoon tea, lunch, folding chair
Driving to the site: This could be in convoy or separately. Sketch map provided.
Our gathering point will be St. Kilda Junction, a prominent, signposted crossroads in the eastern section of the forest. This is accessed from the McIvor Highway, via Murphy Lane, Minards Lane, Murphy Track and Murphy Road – believe it or not, they all join each other!
Hopefully they will not be wet. The distance from the clubrooms is about 25.0 km
Toilets: Of course there are no toilet facilities at the site, so please attend to nature at the clubrooms before you go, and be prepared to "go bush" if need be during the day.
Details of Activities: Morning
•8.30 Depart Golden Square
•9.15 Arrive St. Kilda Junction
•9.30 – 11.30 (maybe 12.00) **Walk in the forest**. Walk along a roughly circular route to see large remnant eucalypts, one each of Grey Box, Yellow Gum and Red Ironbark, in that order. The distance is about 2.7 km. The going is a little rough underfoot (leaf litter and bark, fallen branches, light shrub layer, a few rocks) and is undulating. You just need to take a bit of care.
We will allow time to examine and identify understorey plant species, and listen for and observe birds.
Morning tea on the way somewhere.
We will return to the cars in time for lunch at around midday.
•12.00 – 1.00pm **Lunch**
•Afternoon
Along Ellesmere Road there are a number of other large Red Ironbarks, and we will walk short distances into some of these.
Leave the forest via Ellesmere Track and Plant Road (which goes to Fosterville Road and thence Barnadown Road to Epsom).
Eucalypt topics:
•Classification and taxonomy
•Basic measurements (height, diameter)
•Growth rates
•Strength and weight of large trees
•How water is raised from the roots to the leaves
•Reducing moisture loss
•The important role of big, old eucalypts in the habitat
(Please note. Not all of the above will be covered in depth here. To be continued on the Bung Bong excursion in May)
Other activities:
•Identification of the understory plants
•Bird watching and listing

Waterbugs from South-eastern Australia
The 'Waterbug App' is a free App to help identify Waterbugs from South-eastern Australia. It is priceless (both free and good). Use its key to answer questions that help you identify your waterbug, or whizz through speedbug and see,if you recognize it. The app also has a list function that acts as an index if you already know some waterbugs and just want more info on them, and a gallery if you are simply interested in browsing pictures that demonstrate the diversity of waterbugs.
Information: John Gooderham
john@thewaterbugapp.com ph 0447 893 519
http://www.thewaterbugapp.com/

Excursions planned for remainder of 2015

2. Sunday April 26 **Wellsford Forest's big eucalypts (for** details, see page 9)

3. Sunday May 17 Full day Theme: **Big Red Ironbarks at Bung Bong**

Leader John Lindner and possibly others

Location Property of Lindy Lumsden at Bung Bong, between Maryborough and Avoca, approx. 100 km south-east of Bendigo

Ironbarks This large stand of untouched, original trees is most likely the only one of its kind in Victoria. The trees have large diameters, very wide spreading crowns and are generally not extremely tall. Understorey growth is limited.

Transport It is intended to hire a 22-seater bus, with both the club and individual members contributing to the full cost

Note We will use the club's own field speaker

Details Walking, but not sure of the distance at the moment

4. Sunday June 14 Full day Theme: **Fungi**

Leader Rod Orr, Joy Clusker

Final date This date may change, depending on the season and whether conditions for fungi are favourable (ie early autumn rains, reasonably warm weather)

Location Babbington Road and Bullarto Reservoir (east of Daylesford)

Note This will be an event for the 70th anniversary, which visits haunts pioneered by Reg Smart (died 2013), once our pre-eminent fungi authority and photographer

5. Sunday July 12 Full day Theme: **Geology** Leader: Eric Wilkinson

Detailed notes and maps will be made available Location Volcanic area south of Castlemaine, with 13 stops (eg. Mount Consultation, Guildford area, Yandoit, Daylesford)

6. Friday August 14 Half day Theme: **Waterbird count** (spring – no 2) Leader: Jane Cleary

Location Coliban Water sewerage treatment works, Epsom

7. Sunday August 30 Full day Theme: **Wattles of the Bendigo area** Leader: tba

Location Greater Bendigo National Park – Whipstick and Kamarooka sections

8. "Long weekend" - Friday 11, Saturday 12, Sunday 13 September Activity: **Campout**

Leaders Alistair White, Simon Hay

Locations Mount Samaria State Park (between Benalla and Mansfield)

9. Sunday 18 October Full day Theme: **Botany (Spring wildflowers) and birds**

Leader tba Possible locations local, some based on 2012 SEANA excursion

10. SEANA camp (September, see back page for detail

Planned Speakers for General Meetings 2015 (any amendments will be published in advance)

April - Dr. Angus Webb, 'Environmental water' (see page 11 for details)
May - Mr. Peter Ellis, 'Seventy Years On, Fifty Years Back'
June - Mr. Rob Watkins, 'Bendigo Field Naturalists Club: The first forty years'
July - Mr. Andrew Skeoch, 'The Biophony: The evolution of sound in the natural world'
August - Mr. Gerry Gill, 'An evaluation of Aboriginal landscape management practices viewed from the Anthropocene'

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, April 8 7.30pm
Dr J Angus Webb, Department of Infrastructure Engineering The University of Melbourne
'Justifying environmental flows in the era of the basin plan: a new approach to monitoring and evaluation of ecological responses to environmental watering'. All are welcome

Club Excursions
Sunday April 26 **Wellsford Forest's big eucalypts (Red Ironbark, Yellow Gum)**
Leader : John Lindner and possibly others
See page 9 for details

Sunday May 17 **Big Red Ironbarks at Bung Bong**
Leader: John Lindner and possibly others
(see page 10 for all 2015 excursions details)

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities will continue in 2015, so look out for announcements or check out their website.
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

South-East Australian Naturalists Network (SEANA)
The spring camp will be hosted by the Donald FNC
The dates are Friday 25 to Sunday 27 September
Participants either stay at one central venue or use local caravan parks
The club will receive publicity in due course and pass it on. There is a registration fee and other optional costs
These campouts are a good opportunity to visit other areas and see how other clubs run

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of the month at 1pm the Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.
Next meeting: 21st of April.

Friends of Box Ironbark Forests Bushwalks 2015
We meet at 9.30am outside 30 Templeton St Castlemaine and carpool to the start of walks. Bring water, morning tea and lunch for all walks. Walks normally finish mid afternoon. People of all ages and non-members welcome. No cost.
19 Apr 2015 Muckleford Forest - 8-10km
Leader: Neville Cooper 0401 319 659
17 May 2015 Nuggetty Ranges - 6km
Leader: Brian Cuffley 03 5475 1556

A new program has been released for the series of renowned 'Fungal' presentations.
Full Details and bookings:
http://alisonpouliot.com/projects_fungi_ecology.php
Information: Alison Pouliot 0439 764 344

6th one-day Biodiversity Across the Borders Conference
Friday 12 June 2015
Federation University Mt Helen Campus
Keynote Speaker Assoc. Prof. Ian Lunt: From science to inspiration: 10 tips to promote ecological literacy and successful conservation in our communities.
This is a free conference, (no registration fee).
Indicate Interest: S.K. Florentine ('Florry') 03 5327 9231 s.florentine@federation.edu.au